

MAXIMIZING THE POTENTIAL OF THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES AND GENERAL PURPOSE FORCES

A Monograph

by

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ABSTRACT

MAXIMIZING THE POTENTIAL OF THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES AND
GENERAL PURPOSE FORCES, by MAJ Romas Zimlicki, 68 pages.

One of the most challenging aspects of integrating Special Operation Forces (SOF) and General Purpose Forces (GPF) is determining the appropriate force for a mission. Sometimes those roles are clear, but there are many instances where the force selection process has been unclear. These missions, where a lack of clarity exists are a grey area of SOF and GPF employment. This grey area is explored through comparative case studies of Rangers in World War II, the Congo Dragon Operations, the Mayaguez incident, Operation Eagle Claw, and the Patilla Airfield assault in Operation Just Cause. These case studies evaluate the process of force selection for a particular mission and if that force was appropriate. This case study analysis reveals a reimagining of the range of military operations and how they relate to the roles of SOF and GPF. This reframing helps understand the force selection process and identifying the best suited force for a mission.

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ACRONYMS

A2AD	Anti-Access, Area Denial
AF	Air Force
CO	Contingency Operations
DA	Direct Action
GPF	General Purpose Forces
JOAC	Joint Operational Access Concept
MCO	Major Combat Operations
SEAL	Sea, Air, and Land
SF	Special Forces
SO	Special Operations
SOCOM	Special Operations Command
SOF	Special Operations Forces
US	United States

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INTRODUCTION

The growth of Special Operations Forces (SOF) and the uncertainty about the current threat environment enable the following to be asked: Given the growth of SOF, do they need to be performing all current missions or should some of those missions shift to General Purpose Forces (GPF)? Are there GPF capable of performing these missions? Are there force structures, or authority structures that need to change? Given these questions, have the evolving SOF missions created a mission and capability gap between SOF and GPF, requiring GPF to perform missions recently and historically carried out by previous joint SOF.

The purpose of the study is to determine shifts in mission requirements and if SOF or GPF should be responsible for those requirements.¹ There is no intention to discredit the importance, significance, or remarkable work performed by the SOF community, nor change GPF into SOF. The ultimate goal is to determine ways to maximize the purpose and capabilities of both SOF and GPF, in the execution of their respective missions and the pursuit of national interests.

The significance of the study is critical because it directly relates to the current and near future threat environment and how the Department of Defense will approach that threat environment. It is a matter of how the United States can effectively protect its national security interests, citizens, and allies. Additionally, during a period of fiscal austerity, it is essential to determine how the United States can get the most value and effect out of its forces as the conduct

¹Special Operations Forces—Those Active and Reserve Component forces of the Military Services designated by the Secretary of Defense and specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations. Also called SOF. See also Air Force special operations forces; Army special operations forces; naval special warfare forces. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-05.1, *Joint Special Operations Task Force Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2007). GPF is used instead of conventional forces, the definitions are the same though—1. Those forces capable of conducting operations using non-nuclear weapons. 2. Those forces other than designated special operations forces. Also called CF. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011).

of war changes and the global threat environment changes to reflect an ambiguous threat environment. The range of available tools needs to expand to allow efficient adaption to the environment. This study has several limitations that will require a few general assumptions. The first is, since a portion of this study deals with SOF it runs into an issue of classification of missions and roles. When dealing with some units, their stated missions and roles are not for public dissemination. The second is, while the study will look at authorities and capabilities, it can do little to address the issue of trust and what force is trusted to be employed on a mission. A force may be the primary agency for a mission set, but if they are not trusted then they will not be called to perform the mission.

The delimitations imposed on this monograph are the selectiveness of the case studies and limiting the scope of the future battlefield as defined by a few theorists and publications produced by the Department of Defense. The inherent challenge with this is that by constraining the number of cases and limiting the analysis of the global threat environment, the generalizability of the findings from this study may be limited. Still, the case studies were specifically selected as clear representations of SOF or GPF misuse. The current discussion of the mission balance between SOF and GPF is based on scholarly and professional work. The analysis of future battlefield environments and requirements for military force is based on current academic works, congressional discussion, anecdotal media notes, and finally on professional discussion. The goal is to mitigate the need for complex threat analysis by employing the sum knowledge of the sources. The final and possibly most significant delimitation within the study is the specific force focused upon. With all but a few instances within the case studies, the forces analyzed are from the US Military. The focus within the US Military is on Special Forces (SF), Rangers, and Navy Sea, Air, and Land (SEALs).² Air Force (AF) SOF is not discussed because

²SEAL team—United States Navy forces organized, trained, and equipped to conduct special operations with an emphasis on maritime, coastal, and riverine environments. Rangers—Rapidly

their mission is outside the scope of this study. Within Army SOF, Civil Affairs and Military Information Support Operations are addressed briefly, but their fundamental mission is not affected by the potential mission overlap, or “grey area.” Marine SOF is given limited attention in this study because their mission replicates existing missions held by other forces. The monograph focuses more on capabilities provided, rather than a specific unit. The Marines GPF is a part of the later discussion relating to their mission as a contingency force and their role filling the gap between SOF and GPF.

The sources evaluated come from within the Special Operations (SO) community, Congress, and academic analysis. The sources are analyzed by combining, comparing, and contrasting them to the different missions that both SOF and GPF perform, to determine the suitability of those missions and if a gap of mission and capabilities exists, if it is growing, and if that gap can be addressed by the GPF without expanding SOF any further.

This monograph is organized into five sections. The first section includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, definition of terms, theoretical framework, research questions, limitations, delimitations, and the assumptions of the study. The second section is the methodology of the monograph which includes the selection of the cases and how the process of SOF and GPF roles are traced to determine if there are conceptual gaps. The third section presents a review of the literature, which includes theories of SOF and SOF and GPF integration. The fourth section presents and analyzes the selected case studies, which are; the Ranger operation in Cisterna, Italy, Operation Dragon in the Congo, the hostage rescue during Mayaguez incident, the tragedy at Desert One during Operation Eagle Claw, and finally the SEAL assault on Paitilla Airfield during Operation Just

deployable airborne light infantry organized and trained to conduct highly complex joint direct action operations in coordination with or in support of other special operations units of all Services. Special Forces—US Army forces organized, trained, and equipped to conduct special operations with an emphasis on unconventional warfare capabilities. Also called SF. Joint Chiefs of Staff, JP 3-05.

Cause. The fifth section discusses the lessons that the case studies offer, relative to the misapplication of GPF or SOF. This section continues to elaborate on what the instances suggest for the application of force within the theoretical overlap, or “grey” area.

METHODOLOGY

The principle method of investigation is an amalgam of process tracing and comparative case studies. This method is being used to display how roles, missions, and capabilities of both SOF and GPF are shaped and affected in both historical and contemporary context. Case studies are used as a mechanism to display the process and development of SOF and GPF force selection for missions.

The cases were selected because of how clearly they illustrate the force selection process working or failing. There are no shortages of cases within the last 100 years of successful and failed force employment. The cases will provide a brief synopsis of events relating to the case, and the components that are critical to the theories in this study. The case studies will not be exhaustively detailed accounts; however, they are illustrative. Following the case synopsis, an analytical framework is applied to the case to evaluate the force selection process and appropriateness. The components of the framework that are called Force Selection Criteria are: skills required, subjective degree of difficulty, speed of employment and extraction, force required to achieve relative superiority, and coordination requirements.

The Force Selection Criteria model is an adaptation of Admiral William H. McRaven’s relative superiority model.³ The model that McRaven created was used to assess what made special operations successful. The concept of relative superiority was derived from Clausewitz

³William H. McRaven, *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare; Theory and Practice* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1995), 7.

“Relative superiority is the pivotal moment in an engagement.”⁴ The model assessed operations using the elements of simplicity, security, repetition, surprise, speed, and purpose. By using these elements and graphing them he determined how a SOF element was able to achieve relative superiority and complete the mission. An adaptation of the model assesses how effective a selected force was for a mission. Using elements presented in McRaven’s model and other elements determined to be important to the selection of force for a particular mission.

The skills required evaluation assesses the force used by determining what particular skills the mission required, and if those skills were present in the execution of the mission. This is important when using SOF or GPF as SOF have specialized skills not present in GPF, and vice versa. Sometimes forces are selected for a mission that they are not properly equipped to accomplish.

The subjective degree of difficulty is the hardest concept to address. Something that may have looked incredibly difficult or easy, in hindsight may not have appeared that way at the time of execution. Sometimes there are clear indicators that the order issuing authority was aware that the mission and force tasked were mismatched. This mismatch may occur in terms of the force not being able to achieve relative superiority, or the training level was not present. In the case analysis, the subjective difficulty will assess how the order issuing authority perceived the challenges, and the appropriateness of the force. Relevant to subjective difficulty are strategic, operational, and tactical objectives, as well as perceived policy and political risk⁵ to the national command authority, if relevant.

⁴William H. McRaven, “The Theory of Special Operations” (Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 1993), 6.

⁵Alan C. Lamborn, “Theory and the Politics in World Politics,” *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1997).

Speed of employment is important in determining the force used based on mission requirements. An embassy in danger might need any help that it can get as fast as possible, or there may be enough time to assemble a large assault force. A key question in the force selection process is what forces can be brought to bear and how fast? Additionally, do those forces have enough combat power to achieve relative superiority? Sometimes a misapplication may be required because of constraints created by the situation. The force employed may not be optimal, but it was the best force available given the time.

The force required to achieve relative superiority most closely draws on McRaven's concept of relative superiority. The force required analytical method was developed specifically for this monograph, and is derived from relative superiority. This criterion specifies if a specific amount of force is needed to achieve relative superiority. Force required specifically address the issues of: What size and capability of the force are needed to achieve the desired effects? This criterion is where the determination of weapon selection is made and if the mission requires a proverbial scalpel or sword. This can be further understood by determining the action required, if the force has the appropriate training, and to what degree of risk to the force and to the mission, is created by that force selection.

Coordination is an essential factor in determining the speed and limitations with which a force can be applied. The coordination requirements may be interagency, joint, or inter-governmental. The higher the level of complexity involved in the coordination process, the greater risk the mission may be exposed. Additionally, the coordination requirements may constrain what kind of force can be used and how quickly it can be employed. While the potential always remains that a force may be inserted into a country without that respective country's permission, more often than not, permissions will be sought before entry. Coordination requirements are necessary for intelligence, personnel evacuation, and coordination of lines of effort. Coordination requirements may reflect the joint force challenges in the problem, and the

coordination process can make or break an operation. But coordination is not always a factor, and in some cases may not be assessed in the cases.

An interview and conversation process was conducted with SOF and GPF officers. Discussions with these professionals offered a perspective from the field and from leadership within these organizations. The population used for these discussions were drawn from officers of the grade O-4 through O-6. Their selection and involvement was driven by availability and referral from other interviewees. The interviews helped clarify what the operational population considered mission misalignment, or over taxing. However, in order to maintain their professional anonymity, they were not attributed in their interviews.

Special Operations Forces, Special Operations,⁶ the theory of SOF, and their relationship to GPF are as nebulous as the theory of war. This interaction reflects a complex human system and its perpetual shifting dynamics. These changing dynamics reflect the changing character of wars and how militaries must adapt to that changing character. Understanding the missions and roles of both SOF and GPF in the current security environment and high intensity environments, such as an assault into an Anti-Access, Area Denial (A2AD) Environment, will assist in understanding the relationship of the forces and their missions. The model in this study was developed to portray how GPF and SOF missions may overlap. This model suggests a range of operations that would benefit from additional study. However, this study will focus on a specific subset of those operations called Contingency Operations (CO).⁷ This focus was driven by the

⁶Special operations—Operations requiring unique modes of employment, tactical techniques, equipment and training often conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments and characterized by one or more of the following: time sensitive, clandestine, low visibility, conducted with and/or through indigenous forces, requiring regional expertise, and/or a high degree of risk. Also called SO. (JP 3-05).

⁷Contingency operation—A military operation that is either designated by the Secretary of Defense as a contingency operation or becomes a contingency operation as a matter of law (Title 10, United States Code, Section 101[a][13]). See also contingency; operation. Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), 54. Along with the definition from JP 1-02 the following

case studies and what the literature review showed as the highest risk to forces and national interests, while also being the least understood area of the model.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Theory of Special Operations

The independent use of SOF is a modern construct that results from the professionalization of forces, the expansion of the military bureaucratic system, and technology.⁸ James D. Kiras argues that for something to be a special operation it must support a conventional force.⁹ The obvious flaw in this statement is that SOF is frequently deployed independently and in support of strategic and national objectives, without supporting a conventional force. For the United States, the employment of SOF can be particularly appealing. The United States is a nation-state that has enjoyed the benefits of secure borders to the north and south, and oceans to the east and west. The geographic position of the United States also makes the employment of conventional forces expensive, since they will always be expeditionary. The cost of sustaining the force, moving the force, and the distance the soldiers will be from home generates a social backlash from the American public and creates a government reluctant to deploy GPF for contingency missions. This condition is unique to the United States. The closest ally nation in a

description from JP 1 is very useful. Crisis Response and Limited Contingency Operations. A crisis response or limited contingency operation can be a single small-scale, limited-duration operation or a significant part of a major operation of extended duration involving combat. The associated general strategic and operational objectives are to protect US interests and prevent surprise attack or further conflict. Included are operations to ensure the safety of American citizens and US interests while maintaining and improving US ability to operate with multinational partners to deter the hostile ambitions of potential aggressors. . . . Many such operations involve a combination of military forces and capabilities in close cooperation with interorganizational partners. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), I-15).

⁸David Tucker and Christopher J. Lamb, *United States Special Operations Forces* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 185.

⁹James Kiras, *Special Operations and Strategy: From World War II to the War on Terrorism* (London: Routledge, 2006), 2-9.

similar situation is the United Kingdom and few nations in the world have a similar security situation. Given the cost to deploy GPF, it is reasonable that the state is hesitant to deploy them for all but the most strategically important missions. SOF is able to achieve objectives independently, and as such is a more efficient employment of force. SOF offers an enhanced capacity in phase 0 operations.¹⁰ They have a great ability to shape and prevent future conflicts and in the case of the global terror context, SOF has a unique precision strike capability.

The Whale, Elephant, and the newer Eagle are a useful metaphor for considering how the United States employs SOF.¹¹ The Whale represents traditional sea power and countries that depend on the security from the sea. Nations that fit this mold are Great Britain and historically, the city-state of Athens. The Elephant represents land power, a country insecure of about its borders and focused on war on the ground. Examples of the Elephant would be China, Russia, and historically, the city-state of Sparta. The Eagle is a newer concept and is the subject of a growing body of work. The idea follows that a country that is an eagle uses distance to its advantage and strikes rapidly and often, from the air. Currently the only country that would fit the model is the United States. The discussion of the United States as a Whale, Elephant, or Eagle is a long standing debate, but the idea of the Eagle is supported by how the United States employs

¹⁰Phase 0 operations: Shape. Shape phase missions, task, and actions are those that are designed to dissuade or deter adversaries and assure friends, as well as set conditions for the contingency plan and are generally conducted through security cooperation activities. Joint and multinational operations and various interagency activities occur routinely during the shape phase. Shape activities are executed continuously with the intent to enhance international legitimacy and gain multinational cooperation by shaping perceptions and influencing adversaries' and allies' behavior; developing allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations; improving information exchange and intelligence sharing; providing US forces with peacetime and contingency access; and mitigating conditions that could lead to a crisis. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), V-8.

¹¹The Whale and Elephant can be traced back to Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War, later to Hobbes and the Leviathan and Behemoth. A more contemporary article is David Armitage, "The Elephant and the Whale: Empires of Land and Sea," *Journal for Maritime Research* 9, no. 1 (July 2007), doi:10.1080/21533369.2007.9668360. In addition, a reference to the idea of the eagle (though called hawk in this article) can be found at: James R. Holmes, "Whales, Elephants and Hawks," *The Diplomat*, February 14, 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/02/whales-elephants-and-hawks/> (accessed January 23, 2014).

its SOF. For a nation in a geographic position like the United States, the Eagle metaphor can be incredibly appealing.

The fact that there exists a discussion on the theory of SOF, infers that there is confusion about its nature. Kiras points out that GPF can perform SO, and they can be corps d'elite, but they are not SOF.¹² One of the best United States examples of this is the 75th Ranger Regiment. As an organization, discussion and debate could be held if they are SOF or corps d'elite. They certainly perform special operations. They do have a rigorous selection process, though not as rigorous as other SOF units. However, they are as an organization filled with young operators; verses the more prototypical SOF operator being older. The Rangers find themselves in an odd historical predicament. They have always been exceptional, if not elite, had unusual missions, but they have had their role change frequently through history.¹³ The problem is not that they lacked a clear role but that they often fell between worlds. Part of the challenge in considering anything SOF related is identifying what SOF is, why it is, and how it works. Another part of the problem is also reflected by the changing nature of conflict, and how SOF and GPF historically have a tendency of crossing boundaries and blurring with each other.

One of the earliest and best descriptions on the theory of SOF is written by the current Special Operations Command (SOCOM) Commander, Admiral McRaven. In his book, he develops a nascent theory of special operations as being a means of achieving relative superiority thusly enabling a force to achieve mission success.¹⁴ His theory says, "special (operations) forces are able to achieve relative superiority over the enemy if they prepare a simple plan, which is carefully concealed, repeatedly and realistically rehearsed, and executed with surprise, speed, and

¹²Kiras, Introduction.

¹³David W. Hogan, "The Evolution of the Concept of the U.S. Army's Rangers, 1942-1983" (diss., Duke University, 1986), iii.

¹⁴McRaven, *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare*, 1-4.

purpose.”¹⁵ Kiras grapples with the strategic utility of SOF, and if SOF can serve a strategic function without the support a GPF, he further defines just what makes SOF special, and when it is corps d’elite.¹⁶ Robert D. Spulak further refines these ideas and clarifies the theory of special operations begun by McRaven. He explores the SOF ability to reduce friction, the relationship between SOF and GPF, and he postulates that the very nature of SOF requires it be a smaller organization.¹⁷ He argues that SOF can have strategic applications in their own right.¹⁸

Another piece needed to understand the theory of SOF is an understanding of the people of SOF. Samuel Huntington attributes to the modern SOF four things:

1) The creation of a professional officer corps; 2) the introduction of the mass army and the various forms of conscription associated with it; 3) the quantum jump in the level of military technology produced by the industrial revolution; and 4) the increased bureaucratization of the military forces along Weberian lines, flowing from these other changes.¹⁹

The last part to understanding the theory of SOF is to identify the SOF truths: that humans are more important than hardware, quality is better than quantity, SOF cannot be mass-produced, competent SOF cannot be created after emergencies occur, and most special operations require non-SOF support.²⁰

¹⁵Ibid., 381.

¹⁶Kiras, 2-9.

¹⁷Robert G. Spulak, Jr., JSOU Report 07-7, *A Theory of Special Operations: The Origin, Qualities, and Use of SOF* (Hurlburt Airfield: JSOU Press, 2007), 11.

¹⁸Ibid., 26.

¹⁹Eliot A. Cohen, *Commandos and Politicians: Elite Military Units in Modern Democracies* ([Cambridge, MA]: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1978), ii.

²⁰United States Special Operations Command, *Special Operations Command Fact Book 2013* (MacDill AFB: USSOCOM, 2013), 52.

Recognition of the Grey Area

The ability to handle a range of CO has received limited study in either professional military academia or elsewhere. Most of the discussion focuses on what the future GPF looks like, and the role of SOF. However, some think tanks, such as the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, have considered that there may be a theoretical mission and capability gap. In testimony before the Senate, defense analyst Andrew F. Krepinevich stated, “Thus what the Army lacks are forces designed to surge in the event of a major contingency at the lower end of the conflict spectrum, as well as forces designed to prevent such a contingency from arising in the first place.”²¹ There exists several organizations to perform these missions, but they are not as well attuned as they could be. Special Forces and Civil Affairs provide the prevention capability, though, many SF soldiers will say they rarely practice their irregular warfare skills, and are more of a Direct Action (DA) force. The immediate response force is the Global Response Force, the 82nd Airborne Division and Marines afloat. They are important to respond to the missions in the grey area because they are able to respond to the missions that are not clearly GPF or SOF in nature. However, they are not fully optimized to respond to a range of global crises.

In some cases, the recognition of the gap is indirect, and the solution regarding how to address this gap does not seek an understanding of the inherent problem. One example was the development of the Marine Corps Special Operations Command. Recognition of the demands and requirements for SOF led to the obvious question: “where can more SOF be found?” The efforts to meet demand and increase the amount of available SOF included expanding the size of the Army SOF and Naval Special Warfare Command and ultimately to pull the Marines in as the Marine Corps Special Operations Command. Lieutenant Colonel Mark A. Clark argues for the need to replicate capabilities or degrade the force, yet in the development of the Marine Corps

²¹U.S. Congress, Senate, Armed Services Committee, *The Future of U.S. Ground Forces* (March 26, 2009), 4.

Special Operations Command, the forces are given a mission set that resembles an amalgam of SF and SEALs.²² The impact on the Marine Corps with the creation of the Marine Corps Special Operations Command and the resultant degradation of Force Recon is a topic for further discussion in another study.

The recognition of the capability shortfall is evident in the frequent efforts to address the problem, by growing a force that is inherently limited in its growth. For lack of more novel solutions, the default answer is to grow SOF, an organization that by its very selective nature and the SOF truths is limited in how much it can grow before it degrades. A potentially easier solution would be for SOF and GPF to continue self-reflection and determine how to optimize their current structures to increase performance.

Special Operations Forces and General Purpose Forces Integration

Throughout this process of studying SOF and GPF, it is important to recognize that none of this discussion is about denying an organization's necessity to meet the defense requirements of the nation. They all have critical roles, and there are more than a few opportunities for the GPF and SOF to operate together. The focus is to define what those roles and missions are, and how we can maximize a budget-constrained force in a global security environment that is uncertain at best, and requires a quick and adaptive force. Recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan have spurred on intellectual efforts to reinforce the interdependence of the forces. Kiras made arguments that the role of SOF was to enable GPF missions²³ and there are more current discussions about the need for SOF as the supported force.²⁴ In both Iraq and Afghanistan, great

²²Mark A. Clark, "Should the Marines Expand Its Role in Special Operations?" (Strategy Research Project, US Army War College, 2003), 44.

²³Kiras, conclusion.

²⁴David J. O'Hearn, Damon S. Robins, and Aaron C. Sessoms, "Flattening the Learning Curve: SOF as the Supported Command in the Irregular Warfare Environment" (Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2012).

strides had been made at the interoperability of the forces. The *Strategic Landpower Whitepaper* also shows the unity of effort with the Army, Marines, and SOCOM signing this paper as equal partners.²⁵ It reflects the understanding of both SOF and GPF, that they need each other, and that the best way to accomplish national objectives is to work together. Along with the efforts of some of the chiefs, an intellectual effort has been performed on how to integrate and remove barriers between SOF and GPF. One of the most thoughtful arguments addresses the organizational culture of the Army as a whole and how there is a failure to teach understanding between GPF and SOF. There needs to be an understanding that “special” does not mean just elite, but also unique capabilities and how to employ them.²⁶

The challenge to the discussion comes in the informal narrative. A Google search of SOCOM as a separate branch will lead to countless hits. A variety of factors such as the continued growth of Special Operations Forces, its ability to be elite and select from the best available candidates, and the public perception of SOF, have the potential to undermine the cooperation. Combined with the ongoing narrative that big wars using ground forces are finished, and that SOF performing missions within the capabilities of GPF, all undermine the fundamental unity of effort between SOF and GPF, and undermine the common purpose. The identity crisis of the Army as it attempts to determine how to prepare for future conflicts, clashes with the focused drive and efforts of SOCOM and creates a sibling rivalry, on the order of an inter-service rivalry. Fueling the negative discourse are reports that argue for unconventional warfare as a branch because:

Political directives alone have not yielded the organizational change within the US Military required to meet this need. There is no reason to believe they ever will.

²⁵Raymond T. Odierno, GEN, James F. Amos, GEN, and William H. McRaven, ADM, *Strategic Landpower Whitepaper*, May 2013.

²⁶Russell J. Ames, “Interdependence between Army Conventional Forces and Special Operations Forces: Changing Institutional Mental Models” (Monograph, School for Advanced Military Studies, 2013), <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a583676.pdf> (accessed December 12, 2013).

Therefore, legislation must be passed that separates the Unconventional Warfare (UW) capability from the conventional military by creating a new organization that could develop its own unique UW culture designed to carry out UW operations—the Department of Strategic Services.”²⁷

The inflammatory aspect of this concept is that unconventional warfare still takes place in the land domain and it only serves to create a second army, only an unconventional type. Several ideas can be extracted from this discussion. First, the SOF community is frustrated with the Department of Defense’s slow to adapt system. Second, as has been corrected in more modern literature such as Army Special Operations Forces “ARSOF 2022”²⁸ and *SOCOM 2020*,²⁹ SOF and GPF need each other. Not only do they need each other but they also understand that there is not a single universal answer for all situations. While the Army at large is struggling with understanding its future role and appearance, there are missions that need to be done now and it requires a force that can be flexible enough to handle a range of unknown conditions, until the threat environment becomes better known.

Ironically, one of the most discussed topics in SOF literature is improving the interoperability of the different forces. If SOF were to become a separate service, as some have suggested, then the friction could increase significantly. A final concern would be how the services would adapt to the loss of their SOF. Changes that are more dramatic could be that the services would recreate some of the capabilities to replace what was perceived to be lost; an alarmist would offer that SOF would grow into a massive joint forces command. Regardless of what is possible there are no pending changes as of this writing, nor any serious proposals in

²⁷Steven P. Basilici and Jeremy L. Simmons, “Transformation a Bold Case for Unconventional Warfare” (Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2004), 110-111.

²⁸Department of the Army, Army Special Operations Forces, “ARSOF 2022,” *Special Warfare* 26, no. 2 Special Edition (April-June 2013).

²⁹United States Special Operations Command, *Special Operations Forces 2020* (MacDill AFB: USSOCOM, 2013).

publication. As a matter of discourse, the understanding of theory and of the relationships involved are important concepts to address.

However, for every article or informal discussion there is a story from the field that force interoperability is developing in a positive manner. Discussions with several Colonels from both Infantry and SF communities, comprising a range of experiences, reflect a growing trust among the two proponents, and that the goal is to work together towards a common endstate.³⁰ One of the main complaints is the absence of doctrine, senior leader guidance, or clearly defined systems for interoperability. There is a range of monographs that discuss interdependence³¹ and a handful of publications that talk more theory than practice.³²

One of the biggest problems relating to the interoperability of the two forces is mental.³³ Generally, the two components do not fully understand each other and their views are obstructed by preexisting bias, poor experiences, and ignorance. There is a range of other challenges but plainly, the two forces need to have more time exposed to each other, working together and fully integrated. However, deeper efforts to understand these challenges are required because generally, the two forces have different approaches to warfare, and there are deeply ingrained cultural differences in the two forces.

What comes from the literature is that there are currently no good institutional answers on how to integrate and improve interdependence. One of the main reasons is that the war that the United States is currently in with non-state actors is one where GPF is in support of SOF. Targets

³⁰In one instance both Colonels had served Task forces that were comprised of both special operation and general purpose forces. There have also been exercises at JRTC and NTC involving deeply intertwined GPF and SOF.

³¹An example would be: William R. Canda, III, "Tactical Special Operations and Conventional Force Interdependence: The Future of Land Force Development" (Master's Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2013).

³²Spulak, Mcraven, and others reflect that theoretical component

³³Ames, 40-42.

are limited and regulated; all the while impact is minimized. Not many units have habitual relationships with SOF, and there is not a Department of Defense proponent for SOF and GPF interoperability. The SOF truths and the small size of SOF necessitate that SOF receive assistance given the current demand. Most importantly, the literature and discussions with members of the SOF and GPF communities reveal what the single most important aspect of SOF and GPF integration is: relationships and habitual interaction.

CASE STUDIES AND ANALYSIS

This section is divided into four major parts. This section contains the case studies with analysis of the misapplication of different forces, conclusions drawn from the case studies about the selection process, analysis of what the current grey area is in force selection, and what the emerging trend is for the same grey area. Each case is analyzed to draw the salient points that reflect the appropriateness of the force being used. Each case study is broken down by first giving a summary of the events. Following that summary, an assessment of the Force Selection Criteria is used to determine if and how the force was misapplied and ultimately the case will determine a cause for a failure. The cases are used to trace the process of force selection and where the areas are that confusion occurs, or where misapplication of force is present. Finally, the Force Selection Process is applied to the contemporary operating environment and adapted to support the near future security environment.

Cisterna Italy

Background

In 1944, the War Department wanted the Rangers disbanded. The lack of familiarity caused them to be misused as line infantry instead of as a commando like organization, as they were intended to be used. The Rangers frequently struggled with protecting their identity as a commando force. The organization frequently met with resistance by higher echelons that wanted

to employ the force as a reconnaissance element, or divide the force into subordinate units. A surprising supporter was found in George Patton. He advocated organizing the Rangers into a regiment and creating the appropriate echelon of headquarters.³⁴ Following a series of very successful missions in North Africa and Italy, the 1st and 3rd Ranger Battalions were tasked to support of 3rd Infantry Division to assist in the capture of the Italian town Cisterna. The purpose of capturing Cisterna was to enable rapid movement to Rome. Intelligence indicated that the key terrain of Cisterna was vulnerable to attack since German forces were scattered loosely around the area, and this created a temporal opportunity. It was determined that the vulnerability would go away as the Germans built mass. Major General John P. Lucas, Commander of the VI Corps wanted to wait while his forces built up their own supplies and rotate units.³⁵ He was slowing his tempo that had been effective until that point. The German Commander Albert Kesselring did not believe that the German forces would be able to hold back the allies after the Anzio landing. Major General Lucian Truscott, the Commander of the 3rd Infantry Division chose the Rangers to spearhead the assaulting force to Cisterna. The Rangers would form the spearhead with infantry and with armored forces at the flanks and rear. Surprisingly, William Darby said that he felt Cisterna was a fine mission for the Rangers.³⁶

Had the Allied Forces had access to information held by a Polish enemy prisoner of war, they would have known the prisoner had tried to alert them that the German's had improved their defenses during the lull and were ready for the coming assault.³⁷ The defending German's reported that the Rangers were quickly identified. The German's had decided to wait until they

³⁴Jerome J. Haggerty, "A History of the Ranger Battalions in World War II" (diss., Fordham University, 1982), 160.

³⁵Ibid., 184.

³⁶William O. Darby and William H. Baumer, *Darby's Rangers: We Led the Way* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1993), 157.

³⁷Haggerty, 198.

had the Rangers in a better position to defeat them tactically.³⁸ In the end, the 1st and 3rd Battalions were surrounded and destroyed. The units to the Rangers flanks and rear were not able to push through the heavily bolstered German defenses to rescue the few survivors. Shortly after the two battalions were deactivated, and there was significant conflict over the proper employment of the Rangers. While Darby appeared satisfied with the employment of them, General Mark Clark was distinctly upset about the loss and felt that they “were used foolishly as infantry for tasks which they were not equipped to perform.”³⁹ While the 3rd Infantry Division Commander, Truscott, felt it was exactly the type of mission they were created to do.⁴⁰

Following a series of misuses, the remaining Rangers found themselves deactivated and reassigned. One of the arguments to deactivate them was that the concentration of quality soldiers degraded the quality of the army overall.⁴¹ The misuse of the Rangers in World War II can be tied to the lessened need to reduce key points of friction once the Germans began to fall back. Once the allies began to have regular success, they no longer needed to find ways to break the stalemate and reduce the friction. In addition, the commanders would often use them as regular infantry.

Following the formation of the Rangers, the organization continued to have problems with misuse and commanders not understanding how to use them. During exercises, commanders frequently used them in tasks they were not designed to complete, and were often employed as a quick reaction or security force. A misuse led to the placement of the battalions under the command of the Joint Force Commander, rather than a Division Commander.

³⁸Ibid., 192.

³⁹Ibid., 197.

⁴⁰Ibid., 196.

⁴¹Hogan, 140-153.

Force Selection Criteria

Skills Required

The operational approach was to send the Rangers rapidly and stealthily into Cisterna and seize the town in order to facilitate follow-on forces. Conceptually the Rangers were intended to seize a foothold. However, the unique skills the Rangers brought to “crack the tough nut,” by using meticulous planning, rehearsals, and then outfighting their opponent at the point of contact were not needed. Nor were their secondary skills of reconnaissance and patrolling. The light weapons load the Rangers were carrying put them at significant risk and ultimately the crack force had reduced odds of survival because of how lightly equipped their formation was. A standard or mechanized infantry formation trying to achieve a breakthrough would have been more effective.

Subjective Degree of Difficulty

The perceived degree of difficulty was low. The initial intelligence showed the Germans unprepared and defended with insufficient forces. However, following the operational delay, the estimates were not updated and enemy force locations were not verified. Truscott believed that the Rangers would sneak through the cracks in the German line easily and seize Cisterna until follow-on forces arrived. Given the delay, a better employment of the Rangers would have been to conduct reconnaissance of enemy positions, or identify a key node in the defense they could attack to facilitate penetration.

Speed of Employment and Extraction

The original intent was to use the speed of movement that the Rangers had to reach and seize Cisterna during the night. However, the terrain restricted the Rangers speed, and in the end, they moved about the same speed as any formation, all while being observed by the Germans. Extraction was not possible once a superior force surrounded them.

Force Required to achieve Relative Superiority

The Rangers were attempting to use speed to achieve relative superiority but they also proceeded as if they had superiority from the very beginning. However, they would have needed to identify a critical vulnerability and destroy it, if they wanted to have any chance of achieving relative superiority, given the situation. They were drastically underpowered and did not have the weapon systems needed to achieve their mission.

Coordination Requirements

The Rangers were serving as part of a larger conventional force. The most important requirement for the Rangers was to insure that their higher headquarters fully understood their mission and capabilities. Since Darby previously stated he also believed it to be a proper application of the Rangers, those coordination's did not occur. Further, the Rangers knew there was a potential to be isolated from friendly forces, but plans were not developed to have a quick reaction force ready. This risk to force was not learned until later on during the Operation Market Garden missions.

Misapplication and Mission Type

This was a classic example of using SOF forces for a mission more clearly suited for GPF. They were not configured to run into the teeth of an enemy force. While they had previously performed similar missions and would later on, their strength was breaking down a critical friction point with precision and force. A more effective use of the Rangers would have been to conduct reconnaissance and determine effective routes for follow-on forces, launching a raid on enemy rear area, attack to facilitate a breach point for follow-on forces, or feint towards a different location that would have reduced the pressure needed near Cisterna. Ultimately, the Rangers, while miscast for the mission, and yet still likely to have succeeded had the mission not been delayed, giving the Germans the time to improve their defenses.

Proximate Cause

Misapplication of force, caused by Darby not being able to remove himself from the swirl of the fight to see that the Rangers were plugged in like a line unit and by Truscott not fully understanding their employment. He made have made the classic mistake of thinking that they were a panacea and by employing them, victory was assured. The proximity to the operation and the size of the Ranger Force staff may have contributed to the misapplication of force at Cisterna. Darby may have been blinded to how the force was being used poorly, because of his proximity to the mission. It took General Clark from echelons above to identify that they were not built to do that mission, a mission that an Infantry Company would have been better suited for.

Congo Operations

Background

The Congo Operations in 1964 can be organized into three distinct components. They are the aborted plans by the United States to employ a SOF and GPF organization, a deliberate and very aggressive mercenary operation, and the Dragon Operations. Of these three different approaches, the Dragon Operations were the best, bad option available. This case study is unique in that it reflects an absence of forces designed to complete the situation's unique requirements. The many iterations of planning, and mixture of mercenaries, Central Intelligence Agency, and Belgian Paracommandos, reflect the uncertainty of how to approach the mission. The United States was likely able to build a force that could have approximated the proper force structure,⁴² but political pressure in the United States compelled its leaders to keep the mission low profile.⁴³

⁴²Though the two forces that would have been used would not have been properly trained, equipped or organized to complete the task. They would have been ad hoc.

⁴³Jeffrey H. Michaels, "Breaking the Rules: The CIA and Counterinsurgency in the Congo 1964–1965," *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 25, no. 1 (December 2011): 134, doi:10.1080/08850607.2012.623018 (accessed December 11, 2013).

As a result the United States struggled with how to save its citizens and not get involved in a large campaign.

The Dragon Operations occurred in 1964 following the transition from the Belgians to local national control of the Congo. Following a period of civil conflict the Simbas, a large challenger for power, captured the key city of Stanleyville. When Stanleyville was captured there were approximately 1600 foreigners living in the city.⁴⁴ Many of those captured were living in Stanleyville for work, embassy staff, and those that while not ethnically local called the area home. Following the capture of Stanleyville the US Embassy in Leopoldville hastily planned and assembled a rescue force comprised of US Navy assets and mercenaries.⁴⁵ The initial rescue plan was put on hold, and the plan went through multiple iterations of change. Key to the changes was the interests of the presiding government in the Congo. They felt a strong need to destroy the Simbas since they had captured a large portion of the country. The Belgians became involved because they had a large number of citizens in the country and they were criticized for their actions in 1960. The plans became increasingly complicated as the iterations occurred, including carrier strike groups and the 82nd Airborne.

In August 1964, a mass of brutal and senseless murders took place in Stanleyville killing thousands. The degrading situation in the city led to Belgians inside the city being unable to secure their safety. As bad as the situation was for the Belgians, the Americans received greater scrutiny and were treated poorer than the other western hostages.⁴⁶ The increasingly complicated mess in the Congo became more agitated when the Simba leader Olenga took heavy losses in a

⁴⁴Thomas P. Odom, "Dragon Operations: Hostage Rescues in the Congo, 1964-1965," *Leavenworth Papers*, no. 14 (July 1988): 10, <http://www.dtic.mil/get-tr-doc/pdf?AD=ADA211790> (accessed September 10, 2013).

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 21.

battle, mainly due to American air support. Worse still, Americans in Stanleyville were deliberately being used as hostages and the situation for the Belgians was eroding.

A variety of plans continued to be developed and refined. One of the most daring was the planned employment SF elements to infiltrate and rescue over 300 western hostages.⁴⁷ One of the American plans called for a combined force of both paratroopers and SF to conduct the mission. However, the size and purpose of the SF force was not consistent with their design. The training and preparation of the paratroopers were also not sufficient.⁴⁸ The operation was complex, in that it was both multinational and joint, at a time when protocols had not yet been developed for that type of operation. The plan was very ambitious given the size of the operation and number of tasks involved.⁴⁹ Mercenaries were employed extensively to fighting a war off the books.⁵⁰ In the end, the plan that was settled upon comprised the Dragon Operations and consisted of Dragon Rouge, and Dragon Noir. The plan was a remarkable joint and combined operation with the principle ground maneuver force comprised of Belgian Paracommandos.

Operation Dragon was a joint and multinational mission. It employed Belgian Paracommandos, USAF lift aircraft, and an unassociated, though related, supporting operation by the mercenary forces. The United States went to the Belgians because of political pressures, not to put boots on the ground, but was compelled by the need to rescue its citizens. None of the forces employed were designed to do the mission, and the volume of force and lack of precision in executing tactical tasks resulted in low efficiency and high risk execution.

Unfortunately, the execution of Operation Dragon was flawed, and the forces behavior and actions were more reflective of a normal force then of a corps d'elite or SOF. The

⁴⁷Odom, 28.

⁴⁸Ibid., 54.

⁴⁹Ibid., 51.

⁵⁰Michaels, 130-59.

paracommandos performed heroically, but they were not created to conduct the mission that they ultimately executed. The Belgian designation of paracommando at the time was slightly misleading. They had foundations in commando organizations and with Special Air Service organizations, but they were a force mostly made of conscripts. Additionally, their training and cohesive unit experience was very short.⁵¹ While their name implies they are SOF, the ability is really in name only. One of the most prominent examples of the inexperience appeared during their planning process, when they had designed their ground tactical plan before they received any intelligence on the objective.⁵² Ultimately, Dragon Rouge was a successful operation. Thankfully resistance was relatively low, in part because of the efforts of the mercenaries. The caveat is that the Simbas killed thousands of ethnic indigenous hostages and several hundred foreigners. The actual rescue itself saved 1600 hostages, and resulted in the deaths of 33 hostages, two dead paracommandos, and an undetermined number of dead mercenaries. The numbers are fairly remarkable.⁵³ The operation was remarkable because of the ratios of dead to the rescued; the massive distance involved and the combined and joint nature of the force.

However, significant amounts of friction were introduced into the operation because of the force composition and capability. The Dragon Operations were conducted in rapid succession, with a force of inferior size, compared to the opponent, and a lack of preparation. The pace overtaxed the endurance and capability of the force.⁵⁴ Additionally, the use of the paracommandos and mercenaries led to an extremely delayed employment process that led to the death of hostages of both western and African descent, as well as rumors that the mercenaries were unscrupulous as to whom, and how many, they were willing to kill. However, the operation

⁵¹Odom, 54.

⁵²Ibid., 72.

⁵³Ibid., 159.

⁵⁴Ibid., 124.

was successful, only with challenges and higher hostage casualties than may have occurred had the proper SOF or properly trained GPF been available.

Force Selection Criteria

Skills Required

If the paracommandos had met more resistance on the Stanleyville objective they would have likely come under significant difficulties. They did not have the requisite background to push into a contested target and conduct a hostage rescue that would have kept the hostage casualties to a minimum.

Subjective Degree of Difficulty

Operation Dragon was remarkably complex and made significantly more complex by its multinational dynamic. The mission was incredibly difficult and the US Government's desire to maintain a low profile made the mission even more difficult. The lack of desire to send forces led to using mercenaries and when that no longer seemed sufficient they went to the Belgians for help. The external constraints made a difficult mission significantly more challenging.

Speed of Employment and Extraction

The Dragon Operations were executed and the extraction occurred very quickly, especially when 1600 hostages are factored into the extraction efforts. The planning process was made significantly more difficult because of the politics involved and existing command structures in the US forces. However, the Congo Operations as a whole were very slow to develop, as is evident by the many different plans and operations that were prepared prior to the Dragon Operations. A rapidly deployable force of sufficient size and capability did not exist. As such, a protracted and varied approach was required to eventually rescue the hostages.

Force Required to achieve Relative Superiority

Relative superiority was achieved once the forces hit the ground. This was in large part achieved because of the actions of the mercenaries in the area. The force would have been challenged if not for the concurrent ground effort. The paracommandos had an advantage in combat power when compared to the Simbas. However, the Simbas had the potential to mass and cause significant damage. Overall, the effort was effective when the two forces were combined.

Coordination Requirements

The coordination required was staggering. Given the various institutional inefficiencies during the operations, the number of plans that were produced, and the time horizon, the coordination required made for a staggering political, military feat.

Misapplication and Mission Type

The forces used were not optimal for the mission. However, there were not many good options. The paracommandos are a good example of picking the best, bad option. Though those forces were the best available at the time, they were not optimal and had they met greater resistance, the mission result could have been catastrophic. The reliance on mercenaries through the Congo Operations reflects the lack of capability to enter and rescue the hostages. The crisis went on for an extended period and the paracommandos only went in after an extended conflict fought by the mercenary elements.

Mayaguez

Background

The Mayaguez incident occurred at the end of the Vietnam Conflict. The Mayaguez incident was between the Khmer Rouge and the United States. The Khmer Rouge seized the container vessel the SS Mayaguez and took the crew hostage. The incident is considered the last action of the Vietnam Conflict and led to a rapid military response by the Ford Administration.

The incident was regionally challenging for the United States because of its proximity to Vietnam, and despite the clear violation of the Mayaguez's sovereignty, the United States came under significant pressure from regional friends because of the planned employment of Marines to rescue the crew.⁵⁵ The incident was further exacerbated by its proximity to the end of the Vietnam Conflict. President Ford and Secretary Kissinger were reportedly eager to show the world that the United States was not a "paper tiger"⁵⁶ with a resultant deployment of a 1000 Marines and discussions of using B-52 bombing missions in retaliation.

The Khmer Rouge initially attempted to coerce the ship into the port of Kompong Som. The Captain of the ship was able to prevent this by saying that his radar was not functioning and could not safely navigate the port. The ship was then forced to anchor outside the 12 mile territorial waters limit. The Khmer Rouge proceeded to send gunboats toward the Mayaguez, which were interdicted by USAF fighters stationed in Thailand. They sank three gunboats and damaged four before the Khmer Rouge managed to sneak crew off the ship under the guise of a fishing boat.⁵⁷ The employment of Marines during the Mayaguez incident shows that the misapplication of GPF for an SOF or corps d'elite mission can be very costly.⁵⁸ When the Marines were employed, they were launched as a large force and were conducting a deliberate amphibious assault on the beaches of the island. Poor intelligence forced a more heavy-handed approach by the United States that led to several areas of intense fighting, and a requirement by the ground forces to sweep the island for the crew. The sad irony of the Mayaguez incident was

⁵⁵Digital National Security Archive, "The Mayaguez Incident," National Security Council Briefing to Gerald Ford, May 14, 1975, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com/nsa/documents/HN/01836/all.pdf> (accessed January 26, 2014).

⁵⁶David R. Mets, "Last Flight from Koh Tang: The Mayaguez Incident a Generation Later," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 45 (2007): 113.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 112.

⁵⁸Roy Rowan, *The Four Days of Mayaguez* (New York: Norton, 1975).

that the Khmer Rouge released the ship and its crew before the assault. The Khmer Rouge had broadcast this fact on local media outlets but the United States did not learn of the release and continued operations.⁵⁹ In addition to the Marine landing, there was also a directed bombing effort on Kompong Som that continued even after the Mayaguez crew had been recovered. Kissinger reportedly said, “No, but tell them to bomb the mainland. Let’s look ferocious! Otherwise they will attack us as the ship leaves.”⁶⁰

The Mayaguez incident is often shown to be an instance of confusion and coordination difficulties, but others have held up the incident as a shining example of “flexible response” and the execution of a large joint operation in three days combined with failed diplomatic efforts.⁶¹ Though to be fair to Michael Hamm, the considerations of constrained casualties are still a developing concept when he wrote his piece. The cost to rescue the 40 crewmembers was 41 Marines dead, a helicopter lost, and millions spent on naval resources on a failed operation will further the anxiety and fear of the government to employ GPF for missions of that nature. This again illustrates the growing demand for forces that can perform these kinds of missions. This particular mission was very much in the SO realm that is the focus of a Ranger force, or special mission unit. Strategically the mission is considered a success, but functionally it was a messy misapplication of forces, that got the job done in a highly inefficient manner.

⁵⁹Mets, 114.

⁶⁰Chris Lamb, “Belief Systems and Decision Making in the Mayaguez Crisis,” *Political Science Quarterly* 99, no. 4 (Winter 1984-1985): 690, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2150707> (accessed January 26, 2014).

⁶¹Michael J. Hamm, “The Pueblo and Mayaguez Incidents: A Study of Flexible Response and Decision-Making,” *Asian Survey* 17, no. 6 (1977), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2643155> (accessed January 26, 2014).

Force Selection Criteria

Skills Required

In the case of the Mayaguez, options were limited. The skills required would be surgical hostage rescue, the ability to penetrate a primitive A2AD system, and extract from the objective with minimum casualties. A mixture of specialized rescue forces and a brute force capable of countering the Khmer Rouge would be needed to secure the objective and extract the hostages.

Subjective Degree of Difficulty

The concepts of complex interrelations and the concept of complexity had not yet emerged, which impacted perceptions of the time. The United States viewed the incident as an insult by a weaker power that had challenged the superpower following the difficulty known as the Vietnam Conflict. In the Ford Administration, the belief was that the United States had to show decisive strength and crush the antagonist.⁶² Insuring that the rescue forces did not take casualties, never entered the conversation while planning the operation, nor did the idea of being surgical. Surgical hostage rescue operations were still a developing idea.

Speed of Employment and Extraction

The forces deployed with remarkable speed. Three days to scramble a joint task force is an impressive feat. However, that employment was sloppy by contemporary standards, and had a frighteningly high loss of men and equipment to accomplish the mission. The insertion of forces was also an early indicator for challenges posed by an A2AD threat. The loss of multiple helicopters, while trying to land forces, shows the risk to forces without a deliberate and developed access plan. Some of the casualties that were taken during Mayaguez reinforce the

⁶²Lamb, 692.

development of a corridor that forces can flow through, as outlined in *Joint Operational Access Concept* (JOAC).⁶³

Force Required to achieve Relative Superiority

It could be said that the United States had achieved relative superiority just with the threat of the landing force. Not only had superiority been achieved, but also it could easily be argued that overwhelming force reaching into overkill had been achieved. Such significant overmatch had been met that the Khmer Rouge released the hostages before the Marine landing. If the United States had been closely monitoring the Rouge, strategic endstate may have been achieved with no casualties, by using only the threat of force.

Coordination Requirements

The operation was incredibly complicated and there were many significant breakdowns in how the operation was planned and executed. Many of these problems were addressed by the later development of ideas and methods such as Crisis Action Planning.⁶⁴ However, it took many years and another disaster to initiate action to fix the problem.

Misapplication and Mission Type

The modern construct of the Marines would have the capabilities to perform the mission in a much more efficient manner. However, the lesson and experience shows that the use of conventional forces in a blunt and aggressive manner, such as the way they were applied in the Mayaguez incident, reflects a clear misapplication of GPF.

⁶³Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operational Access Concept* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Agency, 2012).

⁶⁴Two notable studies on the failings of the operational and strategic structure can be found in: Edward J. Lengel et al., "The Mayaguez Incident an Organizational Theory Analysis" (Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, September 2006). In addition, Steven E. Bates, "Command, Control, Communication and Intelligence in the Mayaguez Incident: Who's on First?" (Paper, Naval War College, 1998), www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA34856 (accessed January 26, 2014).

Proximate Cause

The proximate cause can be first attributed to the Executive Branch's desire to show the world that the United States is still a strong power. The desire led to a thoughtless application of overwhelming force. Additionally, no structure, or force existed, to plan and perform a precision operation of that type. The overwhelming force, combined with the truncated timeline, resulted in a mission with casualties that were high, given the operational endstate of the mission.

Operation Eagle Claw

Background

One of the most significant moments in US Special Operations history was Operation Eagle Claw. The operation was a joint special operation intended to rescue Americans held hostage during the Iranian hostage crisis in 1980. The incident involved a joint force made up of both special operators and general-purpose forces. The forces being comprised of Army Delta and Rangers, Navy Helicopters, and AF fixed wing lift. The disaster occurred at a rendezvous point called Desert One. The disaster resulted in the loss of eight lives, and ended a rescue operation intended to save the hostages in Iran. The financial cost to the government was \$25 million (1980 Dollars).⁶⁵ The operation was one of the most difficult, complex, and risky SO taken to date. The distances covered were significant, the risk to mission and the risk to force was ever present and substantial. The mission was heavily compartmentalized, and the different services and support elements did not train together to maintain operational security.⁶⁶ As a result, when the time of execution arrived the different components had never trained together, and the operation was

⁶⁵Joint Chiefs of Staff, Memorandum, *Testimony Relating to the Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission, Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 7 May 1980* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1980).

⁶⁶Christine Coker, "Planning in Hostage Rescue Missions, US Operation Eagle Claw and UK Operation Barras," *Military Technology* 30, no. 9 (2006): 69, www.dtic.mil/dtic/auiimp/citations/ghsa/2006_153341/135184.html (accessed January 30, 2014).

essentially new to everyone involved. Additionally, members of the aircrews did not have the training and expertise required to perform their mission. Specifically, the Navy and AF crews were not SO, and they were working well outside their comfort zone. The combination of planning, coordination, and skill challenges led to a disaster resulting in the deaths of service members, the destruction of equipment, and failure of the mission.⁶⁷ The failures led to the creation of numerous SOF agencies. Special Operations Command, Joint Special Operations Command, and the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment can all trace their roots back to that specific incident. The Ranger Regiment found their mission solidified following the disaster and the nation as a whole learned the potential of a successfully completed SO. This particular example does not reflect a misuse but more an absence, or gap in capability. It could be said that the AF and Navy assets were misused that they were the wrong forces for the job, but no other forces yet exist for that role.

Force Selection Criteria

Skills Required

The mission had a remarkable level of complexity. It was, and still is, one of the most ambitious SO missions in history. The operational reach and extremely extended lines of communication were incredibly long. The mission can be broken down into two specific execution skills required. Those two skills were the delivery and extraction of force, and the actual rescue. Whether the rescue would have worked or not is not certain, but there is enough reason to believe that the actual rescue may have worked. Delta had operators in the city, and combined with the Rangers, the skill was sufficient to achieve success. The challenge was with the aircrews. Neither the Navy nor AF crews had experience or background sufficient to believe

⁶⁷*Report on the Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 1992).

that they could handle the extreme operational endurance required, to achieve the operational reach, the mission demanded. Nor is it reasonable to believe that the pilots had enough hours flying under night vision and adverse weather conditions. Finally, the aircraft were all operating in a relatively small footprint on the ground, at Desert One. Air Force and Navy aircraft would be moving in close proximity to each other, all the while working on different ground operational protocols. The Air Traffic Control of the mini airport known as Desert One was also not sufficient, though the reality is, a more robust Air Traffic Control Team would likely not have mitigated the actual accident that occurred. The disaster led to the formation of the Special Operations Aviation Regiment, and the AF enhancing its Special Operations aviation to meet future requirements.

Subjective Degree of Difficulty

The difficulty was well known. It was a very gutsy executive decision and a remarkable challenge to SOF. The mission was absolutely a SOF mission; it required surgical precision, and it needed to exploit a narrow gap in the Iranian defenses. Everyone involved knew that there was a significant risk to both force and mission. The lack of ability in the aircrews may have been known but little was done to alter the crews. The AF reportedly had a multitude of pilots able to handle the distances involved in the mission but they were not carrier rated.⁶⁸

Speed of Employment and Extraction

The operational idea⁶⁹ used a very rapid insertion, combined with a rapid and forceful extraction plan. Critical to the success of the mission was the rapid insertion and extraction. Any

⁶⁸Richard A. Radvanyi, "Operation Eagle Claw-Lessons Learned" (Master's, USMC Command and Staff College, 2001), 25, <http://www.dtic.mil/get-tr-doc/pdf?AD=ADA402471> (accessed January 30, 2014).

⁶⁹Using Milan Vego's description from: Milan N. Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 2009), IX-9.

delays either way, would pose a significant risk to force and mission. The mission was about applying specific combat power at key nodes to facilitate entry and exit.

Force Required to achieve Relative Superiority

The mission was well tailored to meet the requirements of the operational idea. The problem was not so much force in this example, but rather capability. The operational planners accepted that they would not be able to achieve relative superiority for an expanded period. The force would be able to achieve superiority for short durations of time and significant nexus points in time. They would do this by applying overwhelming amounts of power at specific times and locations. On the objectives, Delta and the Rangers would be able to outfight the Iranian forces; the employment of AC-130 Gunships would allow them to briefly gain superiority over Iranian air and ground forces, by engaging very early. Essentially, they were able to achieve superiority for short durations in order to facilitate movement.

Coordination Requirements

The coordination requirements were incredibly complex and challenging. While specific interagency coordination requirements were not required, as they would be in a more overt forcible entry, the joint requirements were substantial and ultimately they were performed insufficiently.

Misapplication and Mission Type

The misapplication lay in the use of traditional air resources. The aircraft and crews were not configured nor trained to perform such a challenging mission. Additionally, the lack of proficiency was not mitigated by performing comprehensive dress rehearsals in a similar terrain. The challenge was further exacerbated by the frequent movement and additions of aircrews as mission estimates changed.

Proximate Cause

The proximate cause to mission failure at Desert One can be attributed to a combination of mission requirements that exceeded pilot and airframe capability, as well as failure to rehearse and coordinate the operations. There are far more exhaustive studies made on the failure of Operation Eagle Claw, but focusing in on force selection, lack of proficiency and the lack of available special operation aviators is a significant factor.

Operation Just Cause

Background

Operation Just Cause was the US Operation to remove Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega. The intervention followed a series of diplomatic challenges between the United States and Noriega. Following the escalation of hostilities, US forces were deployed with the guidance to “Create an environment safe for Americans, Ensure the integrity of the Panama Canal, Provide a stable environment for the freely elected Endara Government, and to bring Noriega to justice.”⁷⁰ The operation was a rapid and joint employment of forces. It was comprised of a mixture of GPF, SOF, Naval, and AF lift assets and is viewed as one of the more terrifying examples of what American Military power can do to an opponent.⁷¹

Operation Just Cause was an example of SOF and GPF appropriately employed and well integrated to the mission. The Blue Spoon Operations Order called for attacks on 27 different locations simultaneously, using a mixture of SOF and GPF based on the target characteristics.⁷² Operation Just Cause was an excellent example to assess force selection and overlap. Select SOF

⁷⁰James H. Embrey, “Operation Just Cause: Concepts for Shaping Future Rapid Decisive Operations” (Strategy Research Project, US Army War College, 2002), 4.

⁷¹Lawrence A. Yates, *The U.S. Military Intervention in Panama: Origins, Planning, and Crisis Management, June 1987-December 1989* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2008).

⁷²Jennifer M. Taw, *Operation Just Cause: Lessons for Operations Other than War* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1996), 7.

had surgical targets such as the rescue of hostage Kurt Muse. Ranger Regiment and the 82nd Airborne were assigned to seize airfields; The Navy SEALs were assigned to disable air and sea craft that Noriega could use to escape. There were many other forces involved in the operation, but these forces all have missions with the possibility of falling in the grey area. The forces were near perfectly selected with the exception of one glaring misuse of the Navy Seals, in Operation Nifty Package, during the assault on Paitilla Airfield.⁷³ In the assault, the SEALs, a force specialized in small unit maritime and land based operations,⁷⁴ were directed to conduct an amphibious assault on a land based and protected objective. The SEALs typically operate as squads and teams, but in this instance, they were operating as platoons. The mission was much more conventional than what they normally plan, train, and execute.⁷⁵ The SEALs were fighting as part of a larger force. During the mission, they fought against an opponent that outnumbered them, and in conditions more suitable for GPF. The platoon had significant difficulties in their mission and suffered four killed in action. The 15-man platoon had 11 casualties. Some unsubstantiated accounts have attributed this mission being assigned to the SEALs as politicking of senior officers to get the SEALs involved in the ground fight. What becomes lost because of the fiasco was the excellent work of another SEAL Team to destroy a gunboat that had the possibility of being used by Noriega to escape. A special mission, accomplished by a force specialized in the task was successful, while a specialized force performing a mission it was not constructed for succeeded, but at a high enough cost it could almost be called a disaster.

⁷³R. Cody Phillips, *Operation Just Cause: The Incursion into Panama* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2004), 23.

⁷⁴Between Afghanistan and Iraq their maritime skills have degraded significantly. This is based largely by discussions with SEALs, and frequency of training on those skills.

⁷⁵David Evans, "A Miscalculation Of Mission For The Seals In Panama?," *Chicago Tribune*, February 9, 1990, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1990-02-09/news/9001120248_1_seals-platoon-plane (accessed October 3, 2013); also covered by Peterson, 62.

Force Selection Criteria

Skills Required

The skills needed to destroy or disable the airplane on the airfield could have come from nearly any standard infantry force. The main justification for the selection of the SEALs was because there was water near the airfield, so they could get to it easily. Additionally the objective was protected by a large enough force of Panamanian Defense Force that the mission planners decided that the SEALs would need to conduct their assault as a larger than normal force.⁷⁶ The skills required are best summed up in the statement of one SEAL on the mission:

In the aftermath, some SEALs asked: Why the unusually large commitment of three platoons? 'If the mission were to take and hold the airfield, Army Rangers or Marines are better-equipped for the job,' one SEAL said. 'Taking out the planes was a standoff operation, a job for a three-man team equipped with AT-4s (shoulder-fired rockets) and machine guns,' he declared. 'If the job was to deny entry and exit to the airfield, a single team spotting for naval gunfire or using the AC-130 gunship overhead could have done the job. There were alternatives.'⁷⁷

Subjective Degree of Difficulty

In this example, the subjective degree of difficulty was estimated as being low. The risk to force, by having them operate in a non-standard fighting formation, was believed to be offset by the proficiency of the SEALs. Because of the perceived ease of mission to the SEALs, they were sent on a mission they were ill suited to perform.

Speed of Employment and Extraction

Not a factor in this scenario. The mission was to seize the airfield and destroy Noriega's aircraft. Given the mission to "seize" further rules out the SEALs, who are typically a short duration raiding force. Additionally, it is possible the mission could have been accomplished in the same amount of time with a conventional or Ranger force.

⁷⁶Evans, *A Miscalculation Of Mission*

⁷⁷Ibid.

Force Required to achieve Relative Superiority

The Seals had enough force to achieve relative superiority because of how they organized them to fight. A SEAL Squad or Team did not have sufficient force, speed, or surprise to achieve relative superiority. As a result, they were reorganized to achieve that superiority. However, as a result of the force being organized to fight in a configuration that was not within their normal training, the capability of the force degraded. As they got bigger they became a less coherent fighting force with a degraded overall capability.

Coordination Requirements

As part of a larger operation and not a contingency response, they did not have additional or special coordination requirements beyond the operational plan.

Misapplication and Mission Type

The misapplication is clear. The mission was more appropriate to a standard Infantry force than SEALs. Rangers could be justified if the perceived degree of difficulty and trust would require alignment of SOF to the mission, instead of GPF.

Proximate Cause

No credible sources are readily available for describing the reasons beyond the location of the airfield near the water. Additionally the decision to use SEALs at the airfield was reported to be a late decision, and that the intelligence estimate of the airfield had it far more lightly defended than it really was.⁷⁸ However, the mission was still more appropriate for a GPF. If SEALs were required, they should have been in a more typical configuration and had the support of GPF.

⁷⁸Melissa Healy, "Tactics Switch May Have Boosted Navy's Invasion Toll," *Los Angeles Times*, January 27, 1990, http://articles.latimes.com/1990-01-27/news/mn-625_1_panama-invasion (accessed December 18, 2013).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

What the Force Selection Criteria in Cases tells us

The Force Selection Criteria can be a useful tool to approximate what went wrong, why it went wrong, and how the force selected for the mission related to that failing. When reviewing table 1 and assessing the trends that emerged in the case studies there are three important takeaways: (1) forces were not properly aligned to achieve objectives efficiently, (2) the nature of the difficulty was not understood, and (3) force required to achieve relative superiority was either absent, or inefficiently applied in all cases. There are exceptions to the rule, but it is possible to suggest that if the model were expanded to a range of other cases the pattern would remain consistent.

Table 1 Force Selection Criteria Analysis

	Cisterna	Congo	Mayaguez	Eagle Claw	Paitilla
Skills	INSUFFICIENT	ACCEPTABLE	INSUFFICIENT	INSUFFICIENT	INSUFFICIENT
Subjective Difficulty	UNDERESTIMATED	VERY DIFFICULT	UNDERESTIMATE	VERY DIFFICULT	UNDERESTIMATE
Speed in/out: was speed essential and was it achieved.	YES/NO	YES, ENABLED EXTERNALLY	YES/HIGH COST	YES/NO.	YES, YES
Force to achieve relative superiority	No	YES/EXTERNALLY ENHANCED	YES	CONDITIONAL YES	No
Coordination Requirements accomplished	N/A	YES	INEFFICIENT	INEFFICIENT	N/A
Misapplication and cause	SOF MISUSE	GPF MISUSE.	GPF MISUSE	GPF MISUSE	SOF MISUSE

Source: Created by author.

Based on the results, there is a grey area where mission overlap and lack of clarity can develop. The lack of clarity is not exclusive to the Clausewitzian fog of war, but within the realm of operational logic, where biases can unduly influence decisions, it is part of that fog. The logical question that follows the idea of a grey area is “what missions are in this grey area?”

Previous sections have shown that there is a tendency for missions to overlap and the potential for uncertainty in force selection to occur. The next section will dissect some of those areas.

Reframing the Range of Military Operations

Based on the patterns assessed in the cases, the existing body of knowledge suggests a reframing of the Range Of Military Operations. The purpose of the reframe is to enable the operations to be viewed in terms of force application and help answer the question “What forces are right for a particular scenario?” Figure 1 reflects this grey area. The graphic represents a chimera of different doctrinal concepts present within the Army and Joint Force. The ideas the graphic represents are from multiple doctrinal publications.⁷⁹ The purpose is to reframe the Range of Military Operations to reflect the use of military power ranging from indirect to direct. Within that spectrum there are three major groupings of missions. Those three groupings are missions related to security cooperation, Defense Support of Civil Authorities and Humanitarian Aid Disaster Relief missions, and conventional use of forces. Counter Insurgency Operations is prominently absent from the categories because it is being treated as a condition that can occur under any of those operations.

⁷⁹Department of the Army, Army Special Operations Forces, “ARSOF 2022” *Special Warfare* 26, no. 2 Special Edition (April-June 2013), 11; Joint Chiefs of Staff, JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, I-5; Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-22, *Foreign Internal Defense* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), I-12.

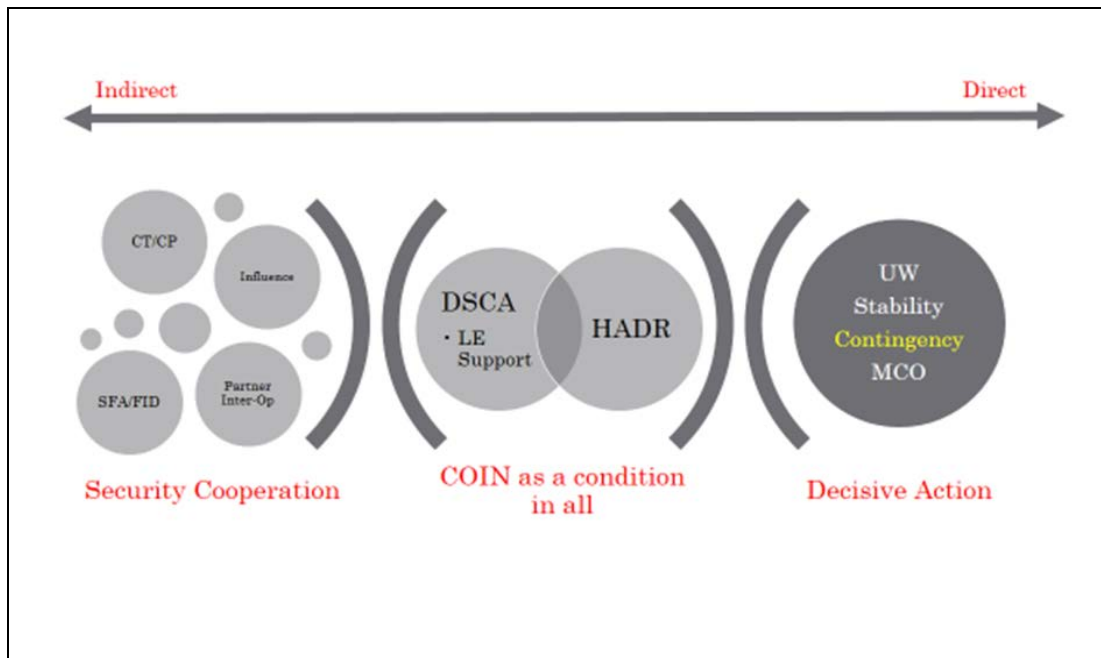


Figure 1. Range of Military Operations Reframe

Source: Created by author.

Indirect—Security Cooperation

There is limited focus in this particular monograph on security cooperation. It will require further study to extract how GPF and SOF can cooperate in that environment. These factors include; how the SF Team and country team interact with a regionally aligned brigade. What are the purposes of the alignment? How do training missions with partner countries by small conventional contingents, fit the process? An example would be how Observer Controller—Trainers are used in Europe. How do brigades and battalions learn to fight side by side with partner nations? How do brigades not make the mistake of thinking they can replicate the training capabilities of SF teams at the tactical level? There are enough questions generated by the focus area that a significant effort could be applied to synthesize the ideas.

Supporting

Similar to Indirect—Security Cooperation, supporting operations will not be addressed, but Defense Support of Civil Authorities and Humanitarian Aid Disaster Relief are both areas that

are being operationally developed for roles, relationships, and methods. The real problem is that the process is very nebulous, and constantly changing to meet a variety of conditions. Ranging from support of Law Enforcement missions to border security, to disaster relief, the Defense Support of Civil Authorities and Humanitarian Aid Disaster Relief are in many ways two sides of the same coin.

Direct—Decisive Action

Based on the case studies and the original direction of research this area will get the focus of attention. This realm is made up of Unconventional Warfare, Stability Operations, Contingency Operations, and Major Combat Operations (MCO). Unconventional Warfare and Stability Operations have received a great deal of attention in the recent past, and could probably stand to receive additional research. MCO are “big” wars and the SOF and GPF relationship will likely revert to a more Kiras oriented model of SOF enabling GPF. The real focal point is Contingency Operations.

Contingency Operations

Within DAs, there is an area annotated as CO. Doctrinally the operations listed under CO are not new. However, these missions are often left floating in doctrine as free radicals and not placed within a particular structure. When CO are exploded out (Figure 2), they reflect a spectrum where there is a significant degree of mission overlap between SOF and GPF. The graphic in figure 2 displays a spectrum that has the duration on the X-axis and relative force required on the Y-axis. Essentially, from left to right the missions go from being very SOF oriented with limited GPF support and then progress all the way up to MCO. Contingency Operations become important to the United States as the country is attempting to reduce its global military footprint and looking to employ forces in as constrained a manner as possible. This shift in the country’s use of military force brings forward the debate of the United States as a Whale,

Elephant, or the newer Eagle. The Eagle is an entity that will strike rapidly from a distance without staying for an extended period.

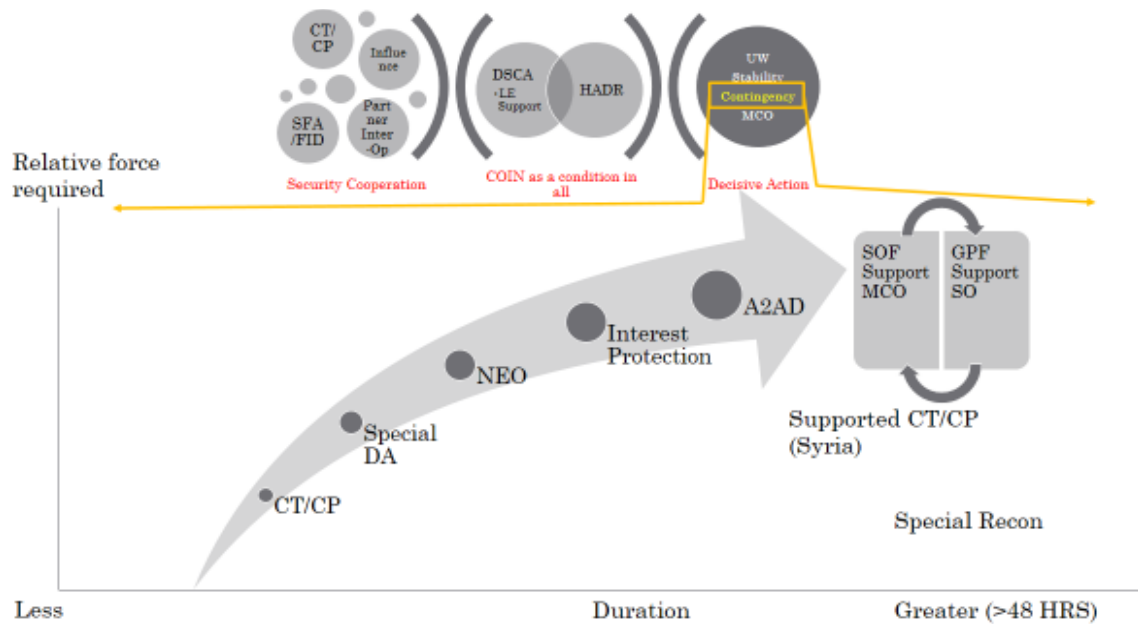


Figure 2. Contingency Operations

Source: Created by author.

The elements that make up CO are broken down further to explain what they mean to understanding the grey area and where the forces overlap. The elements of CO are based on the premise that these are all the unexpected missions that may require crisis response, or immediate short notice support. This is supported by the United States taking a stance of adaptability and focusing on responding to the different crisis and situations on the world stage. It is consistent with all echelons of national security guidance on the nature of the near future security environment as well as postulations from a variety of military theorists and political scientists.⁸⁰

⁸⁰There is a long list of documents supporting this. Some have already been mentioned in the intro, an additional reference would be: Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), *Operational Environments to 2028: The Strategic Environment for Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012).

Going through each of the elements up to MCO, the first is the shortest duration and most specialized. Counter Terrorism—Counter Proliferation⁸¹ is a short duration, a very SOF oriented mission that has a low probability of GPF support. These refer to the specific crisis events that require immediate attention or action on High Value Targets. These missions are typically in the clandestine and-or classified mission realm. Special Direct Action refers to specialized DA missions that require a high degree of skill, the target is of a very high priority, or it requires a specialized skill not present in the GPF.

The next three areas, Non-combatant Evacuation Operations, interest protection, and A2AD are areas that will require significantly more elaboration to clarify their significance. They are elaborated on independently in their own sections later. Finally, MCO is a coin with two sides, they are SO as the supported, or GPF as the supported. Special Operations as a supported mission could hypothetically be Syria, where SOF would be the lead proponent, but they would need the additional mass from GPF to accomplish their mission.⁸² In more standard MCO, the support goes to GPF, and this reflects Kiras's theory more, with SOF operating to reduce friction to enable conventional operations, and conduct preparation of the environment missions. This scenario is only really either plausible in a major regional conflict, or larger.

Anti-Access, Area Denial Explained

The volume of A2AD (Figure 3) threat in any of a variety of potential countries will require greater capacity than what SOF can support. Without growing SOF, and diluting the brand, there is a required capability without sufficient forces to support. This is a prime mission for the Global Response Force, or another theoretical force to bridge the gap. The real challenge

⁸¹Counter Terror/Counter Proliferation

⁸²David Wood, "82nd Airborne Quick-Strike Force Gives Obama New Option in Mideast Crises," U.S. Political News, Opinion and Analysis, 2011, <http://www.politicsdaily.com/2011/03/08/82nd-airborne-quick-strike-force-gives-obama-new-option-in-mideast/print/> (accessed December 16, 2013).

would be the insertion of this force. SOF has built-in covert and clandestine insertion methods. Deployment of an airborne force in a conventional manner would likely lead to the destruction of that force, unless the airborne operation was to be treated almost like an air assault and would have significant support from Suppression of Enemy Air Defense (SEAD) aircraft. Air Sea Battle is one proposed option to counter the A2AD threat, with the goal being to create a narrow corridor. However, there is the possibility that the United States Joint Operational Access Concept⁸³ could become a meat grinder when encountering modern A2AD structures. This suggests a need to find more innovative ways to defeat some of those threats, in order to create and secure the mobility corridor suggested by JOAC. This is an area of interest to land forces. If the JOAC is able to create that corridor, then it must be secured and retained. Seizure of terrain is a land component task. If JOAC is not able to create a corridor, then land component forces are needed to enable a possible breach point. This could be achieved through the seizure and destruction of key A2AD nodes. The real challenge, as stated before, would be the forcible entry of forces. These tasks are spelled out in the JOAC document, but a land component force capable of performing them does not truly exist. Along with JOAC, the joint force would have to look at novel approaches to accessing a country, through either unexpected means, or unexpected directions. To complete that process successfully, terrain would have to be rapidly seized and held, and key nodes would need to be captured and secured until follow-on forces could expand the corridor. This is a commando like capability that would be required within non-commando organization. This reflects the capability shortfall that is driven by a possible future requirement.

⁸³Derived from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operational Access Concept*, 2012.

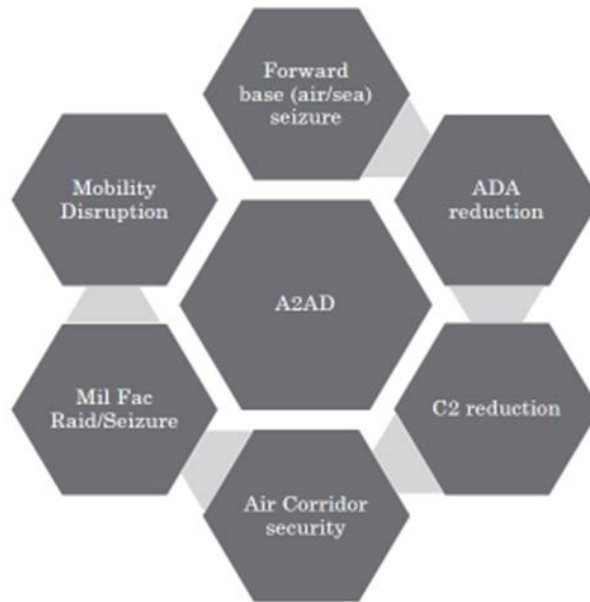


Figure 3. Anti-Access, Area Denial

Source: Created by author.

The A2AD mission is a mission where overlap occurs that runs on the cusp of being an MCO, and would likely be a precursor to MCO. As a mission, it could be the employment of both SOF and GPF to secure key terrain or facilities, to maintain the “Air Corridor” outlined in the JOAC, and to facilitate the flow of forces. The A2AD mission could be one of facilitating access initially by reducing command infrastructure, disruption or reduction of anti-air assets.

Non-combatant Evacuation Operations Explained

Non-combatant Evacuation Operations (Figure 4) can require either a small team of SOF to reinforce forces present, all the way up to a large force with enablers, determining the forces selection criteria assets with the ability to determine what echelon of force is necessary. However, the missions are not necessarily mutually exclusive; there may be times where force mixtures are required, either because of deployment timelines, or special mission requirements. An example of deployment time forcing a force mixture would be if an SOF Team were able to arrive at a crisis

point faster than the Global Response Force or Marine Expeditionary Unit, they might be deployed even if they did not have the relative force required. The purpose would be to buy time until the organization with the necessary combat power could arrive at the crisis point.



Figure 4. Non-combatant Evacuation Operations

Source: Created by author.

Interest Protection

Interest protection (Figure 5) is a mission that is emerging as drawing the most attention from the United States in a resource constrained environment. A recent historical example would be the Algerian oil field hostage crisis in January 2013. The situation was resolved by the Algerian Military, but the scenario is one the United States could find a need to respond. The potential size of the operation could require a large force. Given global counter terror requirements, it could be difficult to mass enough SOF, and enough SOF designed to work in a large enough organization to perform the mission. As a result, the mission is one that could potentially be a GPF response force with a limited contingent, or no contingent of SOF.



Figure 5. Interest Protection

Source: Created by author.

Developing Future

Contingency Forces

Rangers are a force that lives in the grey area between SOF and GPF. Historically, Ranger forces were created to fill a specific need that is not available within the GPF of the time. The modern Ranger Organization is unique in that it was created during peace and in anticipation of the need. General Creighton Abrams supported the creation of the Ranger Regiment in anticipation of a growing need to have a rapidly deployable force to respond to flashpoint scenarios around the world.⁸⁴ “They would be commando-type raiders, not trainers.”⁸⁵ In addition, they “would take over direct-action missions from Special Forces.”⁸⁶ Ironically, in the

⁸⁴Hogan, 476.

⁸⁵Ibid., 483.

⁸⁶Ibid., 484.

past 10 years of war with the Rangers task saturated, SF have found themselves performing an increased DA role, though not to the magnitude that was present before the 75th Ranger Regiment.

While the Rangers have been the gap filling force, the SF found they were performing as the Jack-Of-All-Trades force.⁸⁷ Given the high quality of the force at the time, this reasonable and predictable outcome continues. In interviews, David Hogan found that there was a degree of concern about the employment of SF to a range of contingency missions, primarily because that is not their designed purpose.⁸⁸ They were built for specialized small-scale missions, and Unconventional Warfare. This pattern has recurred in contemporary conversations with SF officers, the increasing belief that SF has deviated too far from its core specialized mission and is too often used as a default DA force.

Eliot A. Cohen suggests that the symbolic role of SOF and their misapplication by politicians is because SOF enables the politicians to appear as taking a harder stance to the public.⁸⁹ He also offers “availability and past successes of elite units may subtly distort policy-makers’ perspectives on political, military problems.”⁹⁰ This is dangerous, the previous success may encourage a politician to lean on SOF for all missions, whether they are suited or not. SOF is the force of choice in the current global security environment. Since 9/11, SOF has been steadfast and reliable to perform their specialized mission, and nearly any mission assigned to them. The mystique of SOF has them displayed over mass media and permeated throughout society. Even leaders that do not understand the roles and abilities of SOF will look to employ them as the force of choice. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld pushed a vision of wars fought by commandos, and

⁸⁷Ibid., 470.

⁸⁸Ibid., 478.

⁸⁹Cohen, 65.

⁹⁰Ibid., 78.

tried to shape the military accordingly. Even in a time where budgets are shrinking, SOCOM has seen remarkable growth.⁹¹ This is a reasonable shift, given the opponent and the nature of the current fight. However, this has also led to a lack of understanding of roles, and as such, SOF are finding themselves employed in a generalized manner.

Key to the integration of GPF and SOF is the understanding of roles and capabilities, then identifying what force and at what mixture is most suitable for the mission. The demand for SOF reflects a growing requirement, and reflects the idea offered by David Tucker and Christopher A. Lamb that “SOF like forces, hold the key to future success in war.”⁹² SOF direct and indirect approaches have great value and are critical in Phase 0 operations. Specifically, they are key to prevention in the “prevent, shape, and win strategy.”⁹³ The ambiguity of how to employ SOF is persistent, it is clear in the ongoing debate over roles and missions, with some proposals to have missions that would violate *posse comitatus* to support domestic law enforcement agencies. Simultaneously, as more missions are placed upon SOF, they are requesting the removal of missions that require skills and intensive training, but not the specialized skills and personalities that are resident in a SOF force.⁹⁴ The authors point out two general problems based on the presumption that overly supporting GPF by SOF impairs the strategic utility of SOF. The first is that overemphasis of support to conventional units can lead to SOF performing “elite” missions and not special missions, and the second is that using SOF primarily for DA and traditional support to GPF can erode the capabilities that make SOF special. This is consistent with the

⁹¹These can be found by review the Quadrennial Defense Review, The defense budget, and the annually published U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress.

⁹²Tucker and Lamb, XIV.

⁹³Ibid., 153; Department of the Army, *Army Strategic Planning Guidance 2013* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), 4.

⁹⁴Tucker and Lamb, 167.

central thesis, that there is an ongoing misapplication of SOF, it is occurring at an increasing rate, and neglects SOF indirect missions.⁹⁵

Tucker and Lamb also pose that, in the information age, US forces have to be flexible enough to adjust rapidly to the shifting security environment. That US forces have to be globally responsive to threats, and that the institutionalization of adaptation is required.⁹⁶ This last list of recommendations is intriguing because it proposes a truly different kind of GPF that is reminiscent of SOF. It proposes a GPF who maintains these attributes and continually prepares for the complex, shifting, and fast world in the information age. The efforts to adopt SOF like concepts to a GPF force shows that the efforts are appropriate and working. The transformation that the military has been looking so hard for and grasping to understand could be in expanding the ability to act quickly, decisively, and in a distributed manner, that is appropriate for a Chaoplexic War.⁹⁷

The grey area is supportive of the idea of growing an organization like the Ranger Regiment since the missions are very “ranger” like; however, arguments such as the addition of a second regiment are significantly flawed.⁹⁸ First, it flies in the face of the SOF truths. Second, an additional regiment would likely require a higher headquarters and associated support elements. Third, two organizations exist to fulfill the role required by the grey area. Those two organizations are the Marine Corps, and the 82nd Airborne in its role as a Global Response Force. The conditional requirements for these two organizations to fulfill this role are; they must increase to a corps d’elite, with near SOF like proficiency at the tasks identified in the previously

⁹⁵Ibid., 174.

⁹⁶Ibid., 185.

⁹⁷Ibid., 188. The term Chaoplexic war is from Antoine J. Bousquet, *The Scientific Way of Warfare: Order and Chaos on the Battlefields of Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

⁹⁸Robert Martinage, *Special Operations Forces Future Challenges and Opportunities* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2008), 14.

mentioned CO.⁹⁹ They must develop their “think differently” mentality, since CO are different from conventional models, and finally they must continue to enhance their ability to operate in the interagency environment as a force to support or be supported, in the accomplishment of national objectives.

A hypothetical counter point could be; “Everyone has had to adapt their mission set to the conflict environment. The demand was high, and there was a need to meet demand.” This could be countered that if the requirements were too great then those missions should have been pushed down to GPF, or GPF needed to be elevated to support them. However, when “Special” units start to look and operate the same, there is a flaw. Specialized elements performing the same functions are not specialized. It possibly suggests the migration of SOF into the realm of corps d’elite. However, requirements to keep casualties low and the covert benefits of SOF have made them the force of choice for most combat arms oriented missions that should be performed by GPF. SEALs in Afghanistan best reflect the second order effect, Marine SOF doing Foreign Internal Defense and Unconventional Warfare, or SF being used as a DA general purpose force, further illustrates this.

There is a lack of clarity about roles and functions between GPF and SOF in the joint force. A grey area has recurred through history where mission alignment between specialized and general forces becomes unclear. The good news is that there is a way to increase the understanding of the grey area, and with an improved understanding, there is the potential to improve efficiency and interoperability. There is opportunity to make the joint force more efficient and better at achieving national objectives. With the insights, many more questions have been raised about how GPF and SOF fit together, and only a small area has been touched in this

⁹⁹The Marines have essentially accomplished this with the MEU-SOC. The 82nd has a fairly high proficiency level, but they would need to increase a range of capabilities, and the Army would need to accept them fulfilling a slightly more specialized role that is very important.

study. More research needs to be done relating to authorities, skills, processes, methods, and other areas of interoperability. In the meantime, hopefully this monograph is capable of providing a resource to further understanding and developing national capabilities.

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